

CHILDREN'S BELIEFS ABOUT THEIR LEARNING AND SCHOOL LIFE

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One of the most interesting questions of pedagogical research is to find the best way to get children to learn effectively and feel themselves happy at school. We know that successful learning is in a close connection with the non-cognitive effects of school life. The main streams of the theoretical background of the research presented include school climate and the well-being of children in school (focusing on connection of climate and learning) as well as the factors of children's school success and motivation to learn.

The following questions were posed: Do children like to go to school? Why yes, or why no? How do children see their school and their learning? What do they consider to be the greatest advantages and problems? How do they relate to peers in their class? What motivates them to learn? Are there any differences between school climate and children's motivation depending on the school's location (the socio-economic composition of the population in settlements of various sizes)? The objectives were (1) listening to children's voices about their school climate and learning; mapping their thinking, especially their attachments to classmates and schools as well as their attitudes to learn; (2) finding the main factors of their positive connection with school and learning; (3) comparing children's opinion in the two research phases and to learn about the thinking of teachers. Since the two samples were different in the two phases, the results show only tendencies.

The sample was comprised of 978 students at the age of 12-13 from Fejér County in 2003, and 2,263 students from all counties in Hungary in 2013. It was hypothesised that in this period the world and schools have changed a lot (e.g. ICT appeared in children's everyday life), so the results would differ greatly. Data were collected by individual questionnaires (the reliability is Cronbach's $\alpha=.71$), and processed with the SPSS program.

The main results are the following. (1) The main reasons of good or bad connection with the school have not changed – positives include friends, extracurricular programs, nice and friendly teachers, good equipment; only the degrees differ. (2) The most important factors of learning motivation include subject-motivation, interests of the subjects, active learning methods, the climate of the class, and the personality of teachers – this has changed a lot.

Using children's voices for developing formal education seems to be one of the best methods. The real situation can be seen, and thus effective plans can be created to improve the quality of school life and learning.